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A
S E R M O N
A G A I N S T
P E R S E C U T I O N .

Preached *March 26. 1680.*

Being the Fourth **SUNDAY** in **LENT**, (on *GAL. IV. 29.* Part
of the *Epistle* for that Day.) And the Time when the Brief for
the Persecuted

P R O T E S T A N T S

In **FRANCE**, was Read in the Parish-Church of *Shapwicke*.

A N D

Now Published to the Consideration of Violent and Head-strong Men,
as well as to put a stop to false Reports.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

By *S. A. BOLDE*, Vicar of *Shapwicke* in *Dorsetshire*.



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TO THE READER.

READER,

IT hath been my constant course for some Months, to Preach every Sunday either on the whole Epistle for the Day, or some part of it. And finding I was commanded in the Brief for the persecuted Protestants in France, (which was brought me in the Week before the fourth Sunday in Lent) to publish it the next Sunday; I found there was no need to alter my wonted course, in order to my pitching on a Subject which might suit with that Occasion. The famous Dr. Patrick, in his Epistle Dedicatory before his Sermon preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. the 21 Sunday after Trinity, 1680. ascribes his being directed to the Subject he then preached on, not so much to his own Prudence; as a kind of Divine Providence; because having observed this same course that year, he did not on that Occasion go out of his way to meet with a fitting Argument. Whether people will put the same Construction on this Discourse, or not, I neither know, nor care. But I think I may truly say, I have discoursed on this Text with a Freedom which becomes a Christian, and particularly a true Son of the Church of England.

It may be some who pretend to the Church, will take exception at this Sermon; for there are some so shallow, and of so short Discourse, they cannot understand how a Man can except against their violent proceedings against some Dissenters, and yet be himself a thorough Conformist. Indeed it is not of any moment what such may either say or think; but yet to give them some satisfaction, if they ever happen to be favoured with any sober and lucid Intervals, I will, amongst the many Instances I might mention for this end, offer these few to their consideration.

1. I could never yet understand that Conformity did oblige any man to lay aside all Bowels of Compassion. Nay, I am sure, to convince and satisfy men with Reason, and by Humility, Gentleness, and Meekness, is most Christian, and tends most to the Honour of particular persons, and whole Churches. How much of fierceness and violence there is any Party, especially if countenanced by the Principles of that persuasion, so much there is of some Infernal and Devilish mixture in it.

2. Those who do generally decry and prosecute Dissenters with greatest passion and virulence, are greatest Strangers unto them. They usually know no more of them, than they learn from some false and scandalous Observator or other.

3. They are commonly ignorant of the State of the Contraversie betwixt us and the Dissenters. The true Reason why Judicious and thinking Conformists do use those particular Ceremonies which are enjoined, is because they are satisfied they come under the general Rule given by the Apostle, viz. that all things be done decently and in order. And the Reason why they observe no other Rites and Ceremonies, (whilst it must be acknowledged there are others every whit as orderly and decent in themselves as these) is, because these alone are enjoined by an Authority, they are persuaded, has power to interpose in these things. And now if others do not break the general Rule given by the Apostle, but apprehend that a freedom from Impositions in these things, is one part of the Liberty they are commanded to stand fast in, why should we quarrel with, and prosecute them? especially whilst they acknowledge that it pertains to Authority to

To the Reader.

take notice of them who are Indecent, and Disorderly in their Worship. Is it not enough that we may act according to our own more minute perswasion, and have the Countenance and Incouragement of those in Power, but we must ruine and oppress them who will not truckle to our Fancies?

4. I have had the Opportunitie to be acquainted both with Conformists and Non-conformists. And as I acknowledge I have great cause to blesse GOD for the worthy Labours, and exemplary Lives of very many in the Church of England, so I ought to give others their due. And this I must say, that those of the Dissenters whom I have been acquainted with, have been men of great Learning, exemplary Piety, strict Devotion, and extraordinary Loyalty; Men who have been diligent Attenders on GOD in his publick Ordinances, eminently Religious in their Families, who have had a great regard to Conscience in all the parts of their Conversation with Men. They have neither been Hunters of Taverns, nor obscene and loose in their Discourse, nor have they been guilty of sitting Days and Nights at Cards and Dice. Indeed they have been Persons that could not be justly blamed for any thing, but that they had straiter Notions concerning Humane Impositions in the Service of GOD, than we Conformists have.

Maister
Hunt's
Appendix to his
Argument for
Bps. right
in judging in
Capital
Causes in
Parliam.
pag. 84.

And a very learned Gentleman has upon Consideration given a very just and good Reason of this. He expresseth himself in these Words. I think this their Scrupulosity may be of GOD, and that some men are by Him framed to it, that He hath provided it as a Bar and Obstacle in the Natures and Complexions of some devout Men, against any Innovations whatsoever, that dangerous ones may not steal upon the Church, for the better maintaining the Simplicity and Purity of Christian Religion and Worship.

If after all this, any remain unsatisfied, they may seek Satisfaction where they please, for

SA. BOLDE.

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S E R M O N
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GALATIANS 4. Verse 29.

But as then He that was born after the Flesh persecuted Him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

¶¶¶:¶¶ Here were some even in the Apostles days, who laboured what they could to hinder the progress of the Gospel, by Preaching up the necessity of the *Jewish* Law. These having insinuated themselves into the Churches of *Galatia*, had infected many of those Christians with their poysonous and false Doctrines: For though they did not openly declare themselves Enemies to the Gospel, yet they did supplant it as to its power and efficacy, by alledging its insufficiency alone, and the necessity of their being Circumcised, and embracing those old Rules GOD had anciently enforced under the former dispensation. They knew if they could leaven and corrupt them with these Principles, they did at first so speciously display, it would not be long before they should entirely undermine that Foundation the Apostles had laid amongst them. For however innocent their Pretences might seem at first, it is clear St. Paul perceived the consequence would be dangerous, *Christ will not profit you at all, Gal. 5. 2.*

For this cause it is he doth labour with them so earnestly, and useth such variety of Arguments to secure them from giving place any further to those false and pernicious Teachers, and to convince them of their Error and Fault, in giving way unto them at all.

Amongst other Arguments, he urgeth the different state men are in when under the Gospel, from that they were in when under the Law: And that the Law was primarily designed onely to prepare and fit Men for the Gospel, but not to continue in the same Place and Power after, as before; no more than he that being arrived to ripe and full years, is bound to continue under their Tutorage who had the care of him in his Minority, *Gal. 4. 1.*

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He afterwards proceeds to Argue with them from the Nature of that Law they are so desirous to be under, *verse 21.* And then explains himself by a Similitude of *Abraham's* two Sons; shewing there is as great a difference between those who are under a Gospel State, and them that are under the Law, as between that Son which was his Natural Child, and that which was conferred on him by the special Promise and powerful Interposition of God's particular Blessing.

And thus he takes occasion to reflect on the great Alteration that was wrought amongst them, since they did listen to, and entertain these false and deceiving Apostles; and does, as it were, tell them, it was no wonder they should thus vary, and that they should now approve wayes of severity towards Christ's Apostles and Followers, seeing they did receive and adhere to them that were directly contrary to Christ's Ministers and Servants. Compare *Gal. 4. 14, 15.* with this *29. v.* It is no more than what hath fallen out in all Ages of the World. The Servants of Satan, and enemies of true Godliness, have alwayes been for Persecuting the Faithful and Obedient Children of GOD. And it seems by this Epistle, to be the especial and peculiar Character of them that are irreligiously and immoderately hot and zealous about Ceremonies, to be the greatest Persecutors of those who are most pious and Conscientious. Look through all the Scriptures, nay, look through all the Ages of the Church, you shall generally find that those who were most for the Persecution of others on the account of some Indifferences relating to Religion, were very wicked Superstitious men; men that were inordinately Zealous for, and fond of some outward Ceremonies. Now if a fondness for any Ceremonies would maintain and justifie Mens persecution of others who cannot approve their Fopperies, one would think these Teachers who were crept in amongst the *Galatians* should be excused, because they pressed onely those things that had formerlie been of Divine appointment: For, *He that came to take away the insupportable Yoke of the Jewish Ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gale the Necks of his Disciples with another in stead of it.* But here we see how dangerous it is to give our selves too great a Liberty in admiring any bare external and accidental Appendage to Religion. Satan doth suddenly strike in on such Occasions, and doth so powerfully affect mens minds with some strange Apprehensions of the Beautie, Excellency, Usefulness, and Necessity of these things, they are quite taken off from minding the inward Part and Soul of Religion. And by this means they come to lay out all their Zeal about these trifling and worthless Parts, they even starve their own Souls, by a constant feasting on these meer Husks, and do what they can to destroy others Souls, at least their Bodies, by persecuting them, if they will not conceive and believe as well of these things, as they do. It is a very shrewd Sign and Token that a Man is a wicked unregenerate Man, if he be of a fierce and persecuting Temper; if he be prone to endeavour to Ruine and Trouble, or further the Vexation and Disturbance of the serious and pious People, only because they cannot be as Ceremonious as he is.

He that was born after the Flesh, &c.) The Words do immediately relate to the Sons of *Abraham*: *Ismael is He that was born after the Flesh,* viz. in a meer natural ordinarie way. Now, as he did Persecute, and Mock, and Deride, and Insult over *Isaac*, who was born after the Spirit, viz. who was the Son of the Promise, and in order to whose Birth there was the Exerting a Divine Power in the accomplishing of that Promise which was made to *Abraham*, when both he

Dr. Stil-
lingf. Pref.
to *Irenic.*

he and Sarah were past Hopes, and naturally incapable of having Children, so it is now, viz. Even so those in these Days, who are of the Seed of Abraham, that pretend they have him for their Father, and are outwardlie Jews, or that pretend themselves so out of servile Compliance, do persecute them that are born after the Spirit; that is, those who are the Children of the Promise, the Seed of Abraham, truelie so called in a Religious Sense, who succeed him in his Faith.

The Jews did very much boast of, and lay an extraordinary stress on their being the Seed of Abraham; they placed most of their Religion on this, and thought it a sufficient Plea for themselves on all Occasions, and an effectual Securitie from those Judgements that were sometimes threatned against them: and therefore we find the Holy Men in Scripture often labouring to Convince them what a Sandie Foundation they did build upon, *Matth. 3. 9. John 8. 39. Rom. 4. 12, 13, 14.* It is indeed a great Mercy to be Born of Pious and Religious Parents; Those Parents that have a great Familiarity and interest with GOD, have usually a great Treasure and Portion of Blessings laid up with God for their Posterity, *Exod. 20. 6.* But People may lay too great a stress on this outward Priviledge; and if Children do not labour to walk in the Steps of Religious and Gracious Parents, but depend wholly on their Predecessors Holiness, they will be fearfully mistaken at last.

He that was born after the Flesh, &c.

He that is a loose, wicked, Unregenerate, Carnal Person, is for Persecuting and Undoing him that is born after the Spirit, him that is Serious, Holy, Strict, and Conscientious; thus it has been, and thus it is. I will sum up all into this Proposition.

Wicked, Unregenerate Men, alwayes have been, and still are for Persecuting Holy, Religious, Spirituall Men. Look through all the Books both of the Old and New Testament, nay, look through all Historie, and you will still find where ever you meet with Persecution, that it was carried on by the Devil's Agents, by wicked Lewd Men, against Holy and Religious Men. Observe the Characters every where of Informers and Persecutors, and see if they have not been branded with some notorious and hateful Wickedness. Doct.

Indeed men can scarce arrive to such an height of Wickedness as this is, till they have by the habitual Exercise of other Crimes seared their Consciences, and are become so insensible, that all the commendible Notions and Sentiments that do usually accompany Mankind, are lost and eradicated out of their breasts.

Consider these few Instances of Persecutors as they now occur, and then see whether all others be not of the same complexion. What an obdured Caitiff and Villain was Cain, that slew his own Brother, because more holy, and consequently better accepted with GOD than he was? What a vile character is Ishmael all along represented under to us? Were not they Drunkards that were against David, and made songs of him? What were the false Prophets that set themselves against Micah? were they not such as did prophesie lies? Who were those that were for the burning the three Children? And for the casting of Daniel into the Lions Den? Were they not all flattering and Abominable Idolaters? What was Judas that betrayed Christ, that informed the high Priest, and Scribes against

against his Master the Son of God? Was he not a Covetous Mercenary Son of Perdition? What were those that swore, and gave Evidence against Christ? were they not a couple of Perjured Miscreants? And if you search and inquire, you will find all Informers against, and Persecutors of the Just and Holy, to be of the same Stamp. Are not the Informers and Persecutors of our Days like to those that were before them? Is it not evident to all, that they are notorious for Perjury, Falseness, Drunkenness, Whoredom, Prophane and common Swearing? Are there any more regardless of the Lords Day, more Irreligious and Obscene in their Discourse, more Vile, Contemptible and base in the Eye and Opinion of every Honest, Pious, Good, or Sober Person? Are there any so unjust, so false, so exorbitantly Vicious, Lewd, and Debac'd as they?

Now Christ and Religion do not allow of Persecutions, of Troubling or Vexing, of Ruining and Undoing any Man, for little Indifferences, much less for Truth and Holiness. They are for Advancing and Propagating Holiness and Peace, and Love, and Condescension, *Isai.* 42. 2, 3. Christ came not to destroy but to save Mens Lives: and sharply rebukes his Disciples when they would have called for Fire from Heaven to destroy the *Samaritans*: It is a sure token Men are Enemies to Christ and Religion, when they are of a persecuting Spirit. It hath alwayes been the great Character and Glory of the Christian Religion, that were ever it came, it did promote and further Quietness, and Peace, and Love, and Brotherlie Kindness; and did banish Wrath and Furie, and Malice, and every hateful and hurtfull Disposition and Inclination, It was always thus, till Popery got some power in the World, and then more barbarous Villanies and outrageous Cruelties were perpetrated under that Name, then were known to the World before. And if it be carefully observed you shall find, that in all Ages, those who have been most for cruel Methods against them that differ from them, have had most of the Spirit of Popery in them; and it is deplorably apparent, that now in our days, they who appear most vigorous and active in Prosecuting those Protestants who differ from others in some accidental Matters, have a great affection for Popery, and are hastening towards Rome as fast as they can.

That the following part of my Discourse may be as plain and easie to you as possible, I will reduce what I design to say on this Subject to these following Heads. 1. I will tell you what persecution is. 2. Name more particularly the Characters of them that are Persecutors. 3. Shew you whence it is that Wicked Men are so violently set against the Godly. 4. I will make some brief Application of the whole.

First.

I am first of all to tell you what Persecution is. And it is an endeavouring to Trouble, Molest, Disturb, Kill or any way Hurt and Injure another Person on some Religious account. Every Prosecutor of a Person, is not properly Persecution, but onlie when it is grounded on some Religious Affair. A Man may be guiltie of Sin in prosecuting another upon Civil account, but this Sin comes under another Denomination, as Oppression, Injustice, unpeaceable Brangling, &c. Now Persecution is much what the same in Religion, that Oppression is in Civils. When Men will not suffer others to enjoy that Libertie, and those Rights in Religion, which either Nature or Revelation do allow them; but will be severe against them, if in every accidental Matter they will not be just of their mind: When Men do hale others to Tribunals; and procure them either to be punished in their Bodies, or in their Estates; or to be deprived of their Lives, or civil Liberties, because they

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